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HOW TO... Customise Windows sounds

It's easy to get rid of annoying Windows beeps and replace them with sweeter sounds. Lauren Taylor shows you how

The Windows sounds are the noises your computer makes whenever you perform an action on your PC such as emptying your Recycle Bin or opening a new application. Windows comes with a pre-set sounds scheme, but if you don't like it you can modify it or create your own.

You can use any audio clip for this purpose, as long as it is saved as a Wav file. There are plenty of Wav audio clips available for free on the internet. Alternatively, you could create your own. If you have a microphone attached to your PC you can record yourself, a child, the family dog barking, or you could record clips of your favourite music tracks. Any of these can then be assigned as Windows sounds.

1 To modify the Windows sound scheme, open the Control Panel. In Category View click on the Sounds, Speech and Audio Devices link (Hardware and Sound in Vista), and then on Change Sound Scheme (change System Sounds in Vista). If your Control Panel is set to Classic View, simply double-click on the Sounds and Audio Devices icon. When the Sounds and Audio Devices Properties dialog box opens, click on the Sounds tab. In the Program Events box you'll see a long list of events. If there is a speaker symbol next to an event, it means that a sound has been allocated to it.

2 Let's try changing one of the sounds associated with an event. Scroll down the Program Events list and select Exit Windows. To hear the sound associated with this event, click on the Play button at the bottom of the dialog box – it looks like a right-pointing arrow. Click on the Browse button. By default, the Browse dialog box will appear with the Media folder open. You can replace the Exit Windows sound with any of the .Wav files in here, or any on your PC.

3 If you want to create a .Wav sound clip from, for example, your favourite MP3 music track, you'll need to use an audio-editing program such as Audacity 1.2.6, which can be downloaded for free from the Expert Toolkit section of our cover DVD or from <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>. Open the file in Audacity. The file itself is shown in waveform across the middle of the window. Click on this waveform where you want your clip to start, and drag to select that portion of music. From the File menu select Export as .Wav.

4 To use this clip as the Exit Windows sound, open the Sounds and Audio Devices Properties dialog box again and click on the Browse button. Navigate to the folder where you saved your .Wav file, select it and press OK.

